

# **Valuing Stakeholder Values:** A Case Study Approach to Evaluating “Return to Play” Legislation in Massachusetts and Washington

**Sue Lin Yee, MA, MPH**  
**Senior Evaluation Scientist**

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# Background on Sports-Related Concussions

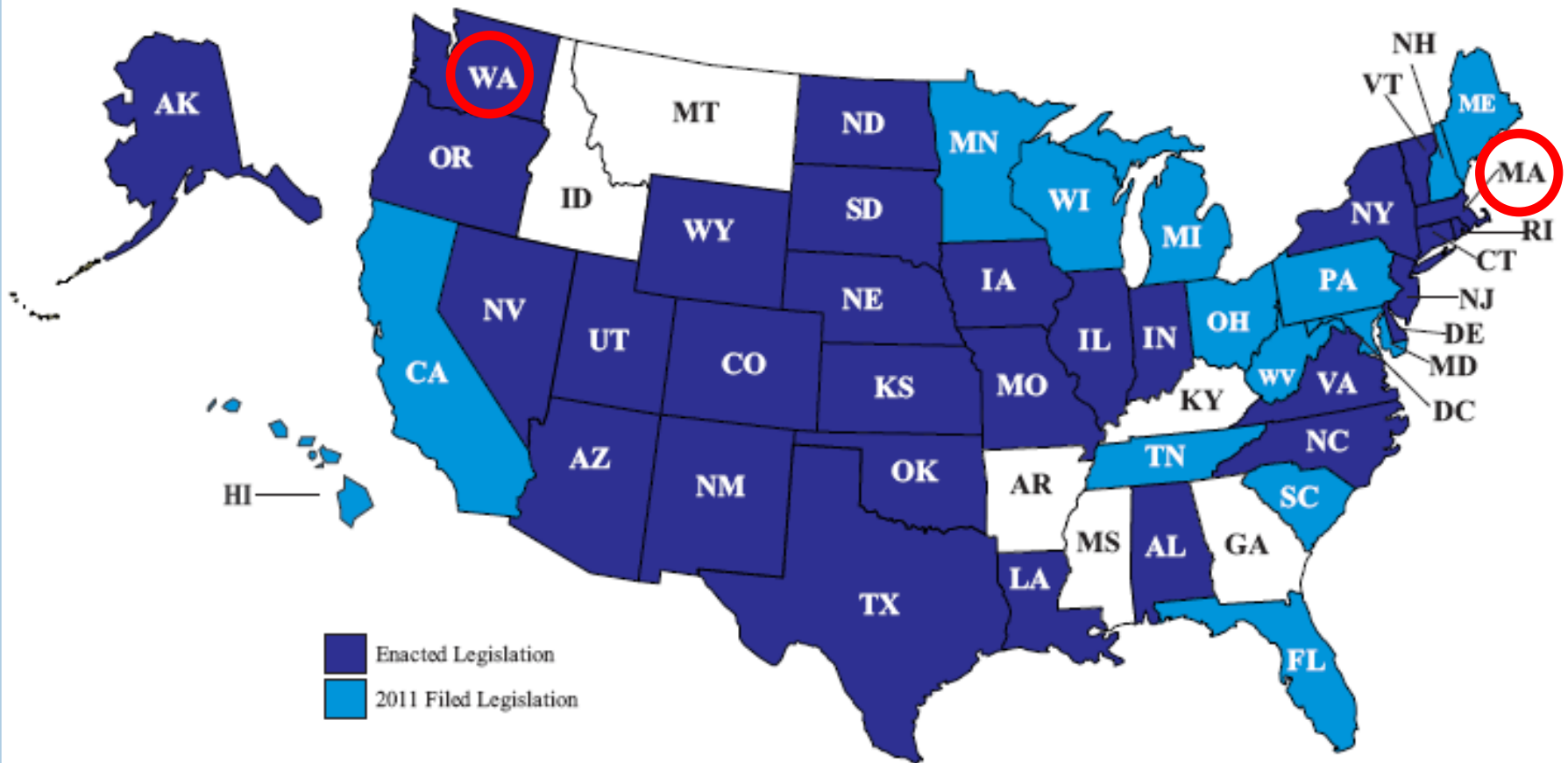
- ❑ A concussion is a blow or motion to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull
- ❑ 1.7 million sports-related and recreation-related concussions annually in U.S.
- ❑ When concussions are not properly evaluated or managed there is risk of catastrophic injury or death
- ❑ Majority of concussions do not result in unconsciousness
- ❑ Continued play can lead to greater injury or death

# Policy Approach to Sports-Related Concussions

- ❑ Currently policy efforts are being utilized to address public health issues
- ❑ Policy approaches utilize rules, standards, and guidelines to improve a population's health
- ❑ Policies can be standardized, measured, evaluated, and replicated
- ❑ Policy often requires consistent and continued enforcement which allows for a long-term intervention

# Sports-Related Concussions Legislation

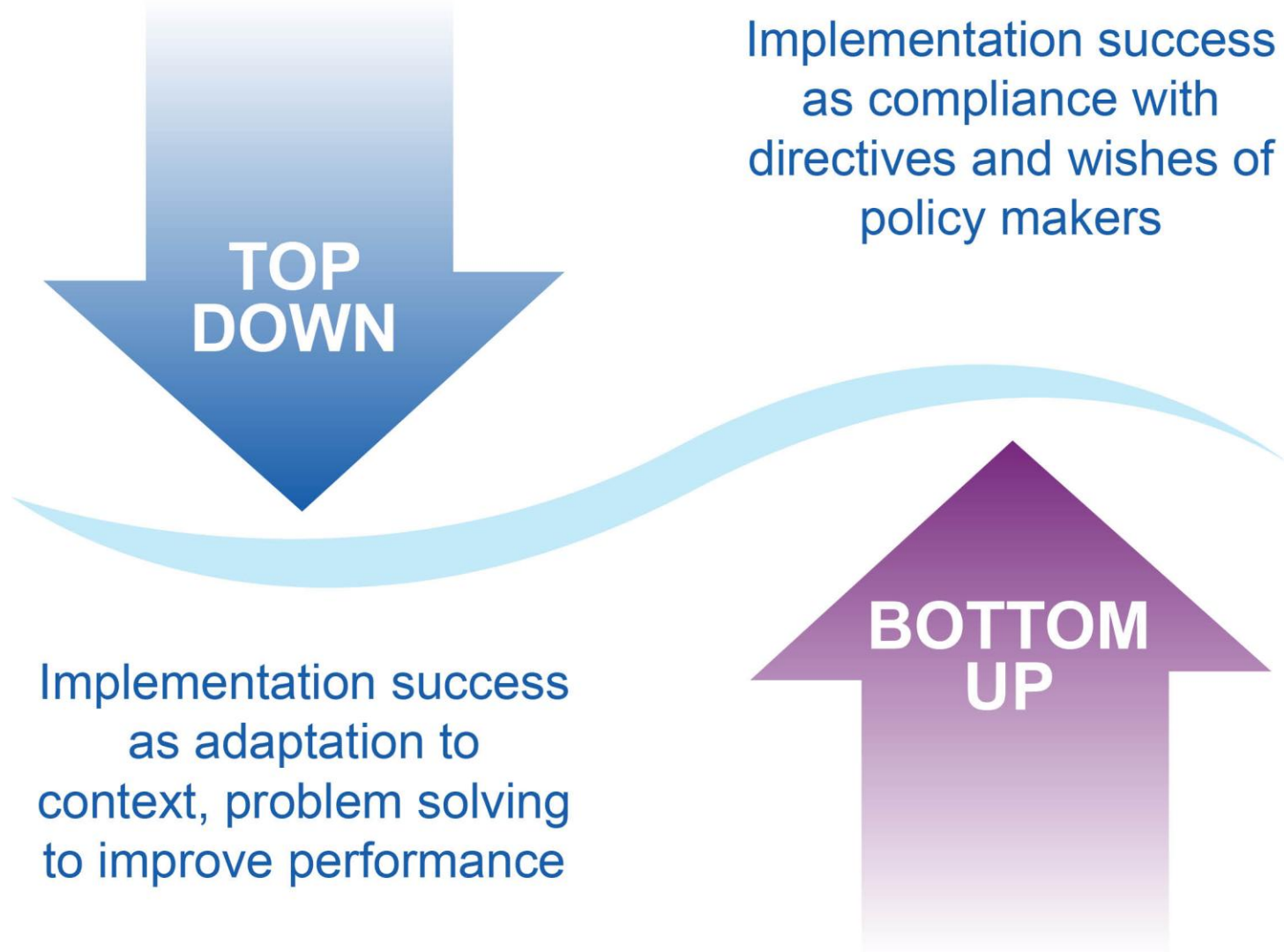
States with Enacted and 2011 Filed Legislation Targeting Youth Sports-Related Concussions



# Components of Return to Play Legislation

- ❑ Must remove from play athletes suspected of having a concussion or head injury:  
**“When in doubt, sit them out!”**
- ❑ Concussion guidelines and education materials developed by local stakeholders
- ❑ Parents and athletes must sign an informed consent form acknowledging risks of athletic activity
- ❑ Athletes require written approval from a health care provider before returning to play
- ❑ Includes recreational youth sports associations unaffiliated with the school system
- ❑ Legislation may require concussion records or histories for athletes

# Two Perspectives of Policy Implementation



## **Return to Play Policy Implementation Evaluation**

- ❑ **Case study evaluation of state youth sports concussion/return to play laws**
  - Promising practices for implementation
  - Guidance on evaluation planning (e.g. data systems)
  - Expected effects of legislation
  - Unintended consequences
- ❑ **Disseminate evaluation findings**
- ❑ **Develop materials based on findings, to disseminate and advise states considering similar legislation**

# Evaluation Approach

## Compare Return to Play implementation in 2 states:

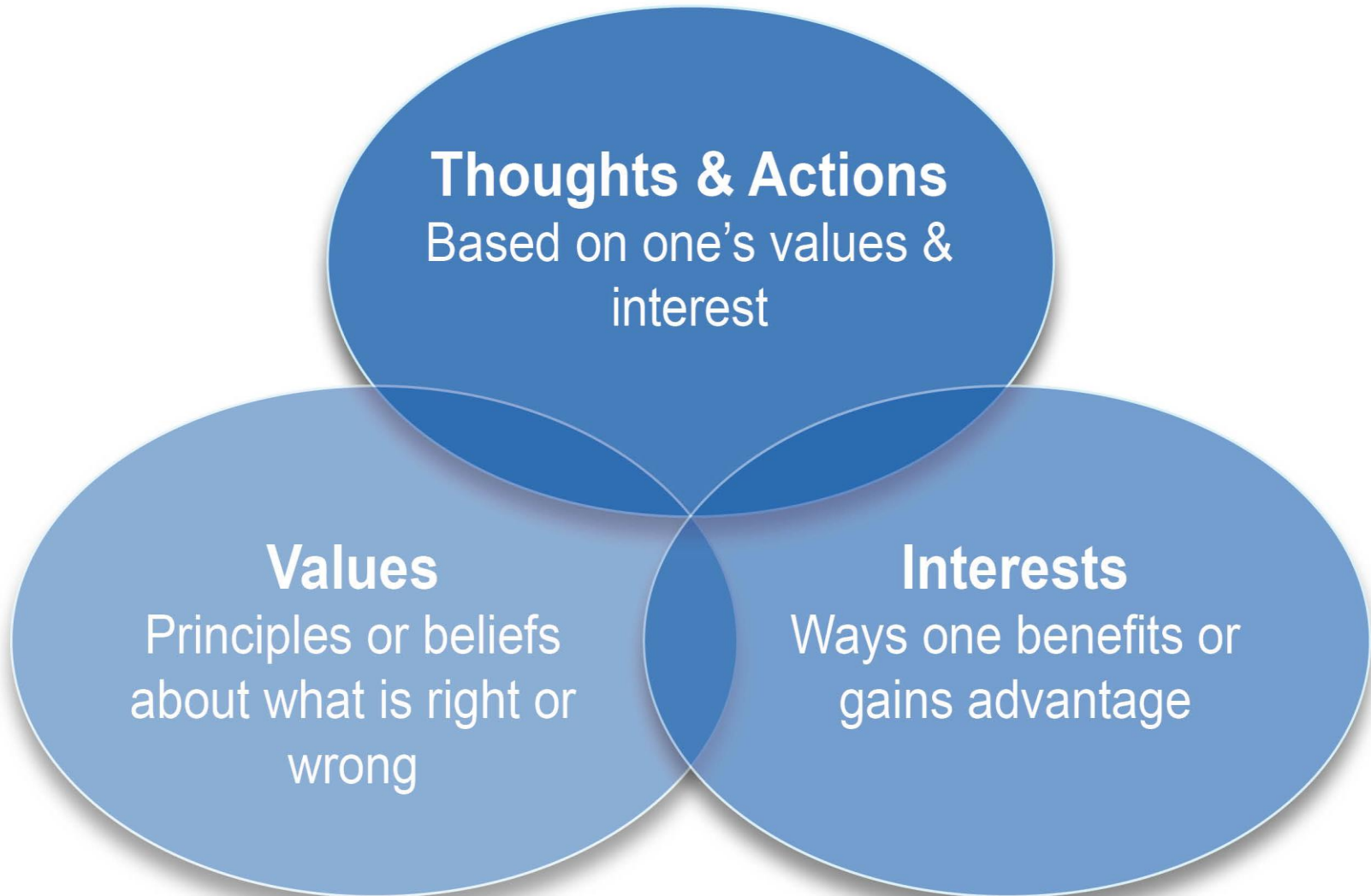
- Stakeholder Interviews with:
  - State, NGOs, Academics, School Districts, Other Partners
- Description of key implementation activities
- Factors that facilitate implementation, including context
- Barriers to implementation
- Evaluation plans and data sources
- Known program effects
- Unintended consequences
- Gaps in the laws/ways to strengthen
- Lessons learned
- Funding sources/amounts



# Key Differences in Implementation

Massachusetts	Washington
State Health Department involved in implementation	State Health Department not involved in implementation
Requires record keeping and concussion histories	Has no requirement for record keeping or concussion histories
Limited participation from local professional sports team	NFL team Seahawks is a major supporter of concussion policy
Implementation is a more collaborative process with public comment period	Implementation is a more top-down process with no official public comment period
2 Seasons to Implement	1 Season to Implement

# Intersection of Values and Interests



# Key Evaluation Questions (Related to Stakeholder Values)

## Requirements

- ❑ What are the specific requirements (affected sports, mandatory evaluations and/or wait periods, etc)?

## Implementation Steps

- ❑ What stakeholders contributed to the implementation?
- ❑ What is ground-level reaction to implementation efforts?

## Barriers/Lessons Learned

- ❑ What were/are barriers to implementation?
- ❑ Lessons learned?

## MA Specific Questions

- ❑ Do coaches report seeing concussion history for athletes? Using?
- ❑ Was information from early adopter states used in recent implementation efforts?

## WA Specific Questions

- ❑ If there were changes in responsibilities what were they and why?
- ❑ What advice would stakeholders give to states currently writing legislation?

# Evaluation Stakeholders

**Interviews  
Per  
State**

State Health Department  
Staff (1-2)

State Athletic Associations  
Members (1-2)

Regional or District Athletic  
Directors (2-4)

School Coaches (8)

## Sample Interview Questions

- ❑ What has been your involvement with the policy implementation?
- ❑ What is your opinion of the Return to Play law as written?
- ❑ What do you perceive to be the main barriers to policy implementation?
- ❑ What are your recommendations for others introducing or beginning to implement return to play legislation?

## **Status of Evaluation: Massachusetts**

- ❑ Implementation of policy recently started
- ❑ Evaluation outreach has just started

## Status of the Evaluation: Washington

- ❑ Interviews completed with state health departments and athletic association representative
- ❑ Interviews completed with 3 athletic directors and 1 athletic trainer
  - Rural and urban
  - Suburban outstanding
- ❑ Interviews completed with 3 girls' soccer coaches and 1 football coach
  - Rural and urban

## Status of the Evaluation: Potential Site Visits

- Potential site visits to both states to:
  - Interview certain stakeholders in person
  - Interview parents, booster club members, and other relevant stakeholders



## Preliminary Themes from WA Interviews

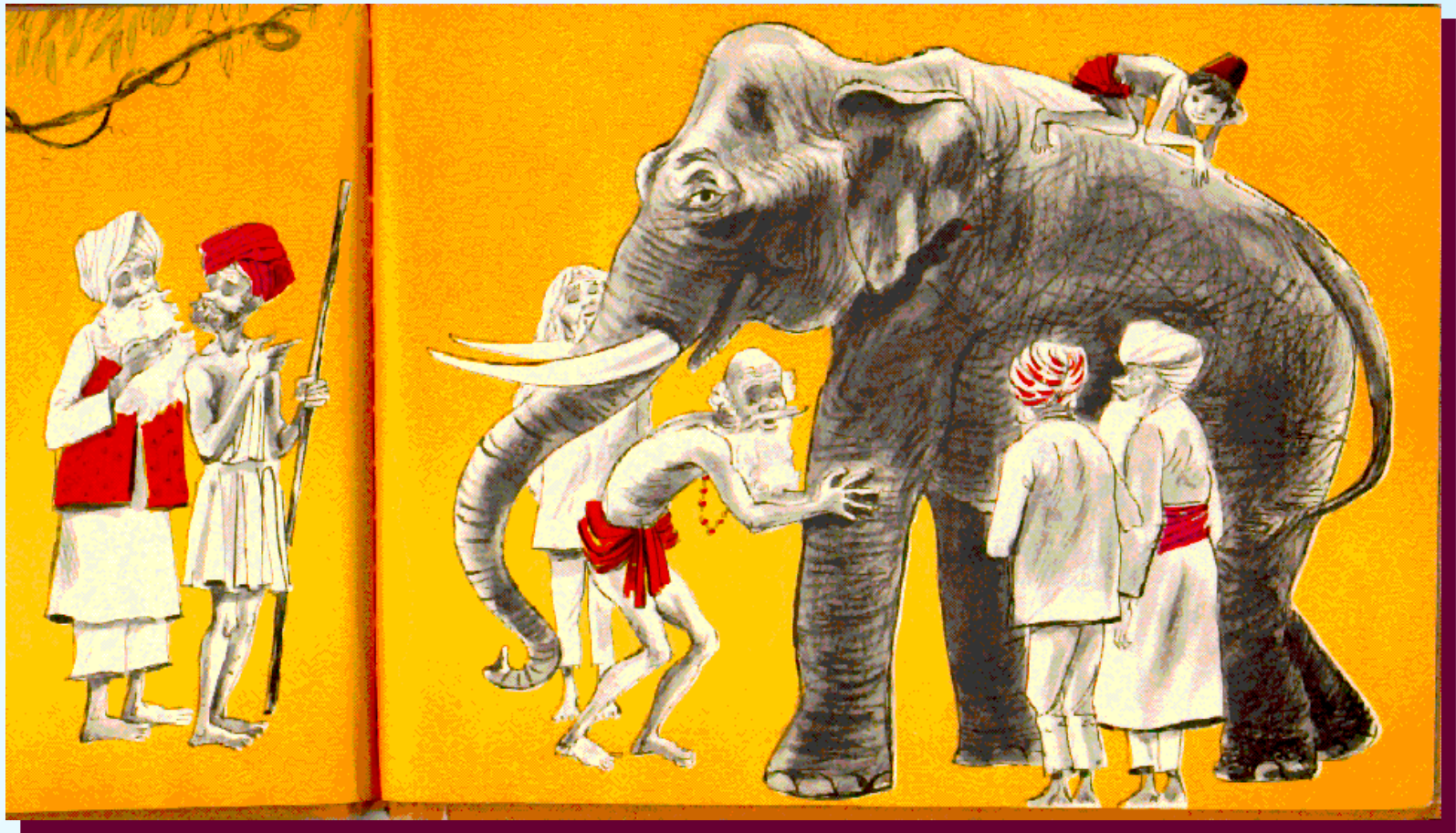
- ❑ Overwhelming positive response to legislation at all levels
- ❑ Professional sports teams raised awareness and implement the legislation in schools
- ❑ High profile personal story of Zachary Lystedt influenced support and raised awareness
- ❑ Online training materials effective in detailing the legislation and the requirements for implementation.
- ❑ Coaches enthusiastic about following new guidelines.

# Preliminary Themes from WA Interviews (Continued)

## Implementation Barriers

- ❑ Parents may pressure coaches, if their child is required to sit out
- ❑ Required medical visits for injured athletes may be unaffordable and inconvenient
- ❑ Athletes who don't want to risk sitting out, may not report symptoms
- ❑ Lack of awareness or understanding of sports-related concussions and related policies

# Discussion & Questions



# Contact Information

**Sue Lin Yee**  
**Senior Evaluation Scientist**  
**Office of the Associate Director for**  
**Science**  
**CDC/NCIPC**  
**Phone: 770-488-3941**  
**Email: [sby9@cdc.gov](mailto:sby9@cdc.gov)**

**For more information please contact Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

1600 Clifton Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30333

Telephone: 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)/TTY: 1-888-232-6348

E-mail: [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov) Web: <http://www.cdc.gov>

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.